

INDUSTRIAL PAPERS

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January 28, 2002

Mr. John G. Greis
USDA Forest Service – Southern Region
1720 Peachtree Rd. NW
Atlanta, GA 30367

Dear Mr. Greis:

As an employee of International Paper, I am commenting about the draft report, “Southern Forest Resource Assessment.” I am also writing to lend my support to the detailed critiques of the report earlier submitted by American Forest & Paper Association and International Paper.

I support the basic findings of the SFRA report, reached by the acknowledged experts who conducted the research. The report’s conclusions have strong merit and should remain in the forefront of a final report. Future policy recommendations need to be based on these well-researched findings.

Among the most important conclusions reached by researchers and needing emphasis in the SFRA are:

- U.S. Southern forest continues to be a sustainable, plentiful, resilient and healthy and renewable resource, in the face of recognized pressures on this resource.
- Forest inventories are keeping up pace and should continue to do so in the future as long as active management remains unfettered, private landowners are provided incentives to keep their lands forested, and some non-forested land is converted to healthy, working forests.
- While U.S. southern forests are generally in excellent condition from an ecological, economic and social perspective, stakeholders need to work together to address conservation of some at-risk forest communities.
- Solutions to at-risk forest issues should recognize the contribution that managed forests play. Well-managed forests provide multiple ecological, social and economic benefits.

I am proud of the stewardship and commitment to the future of these forests that my company, International Paper, has practiced. Former President Jimmy Carter says it well, “Without a dependable timber market...many landowners cannot afford to invest in reforestation and forest maintenance, and the consequences will be land that is barren or converted to other uses. The cost to society is great...”

This report recognizes the important role that the paper and forest products industry has in supporting the stewardship of southern forests. The report rightly concludes that, while improvements are needed, the condition of the forest is sound and that with good stewardship it will remain so. The report highlights threats from urban sprawl and the need to pay special heed to sensitive areas. My company and others in the industry readily acknowledge these challenges. In fact, it is the forest stewardship of companies like International Paper and many other landowners that enable these challenges to be addressed head on.

I am pleased that my industry's historic commitment to stewardship of forestlands is recognized as a key part of the answer to a positive future of the southern forests. I urge you to include these important draft findings in the final report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Robert Simpson".

Robert Simpson
Plant Manager

RS/nah